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FARMERS' BULLETIN · 1114
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

COMMON POULTRY DISEASES



THIS BULLETIN has been written briefly and in simple terms for the beginner, and especially for members of the Boys' and Girls' Poultry Clubs. For additional and more complete information on the subject the reader should ask for Farmers' Bulletin 957, "Important Poultry Diseases." This may be obtained in many cases from club leaders or will be supplied free of charge on application to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Contribution from the Bureau of Animal Industry

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COMMON POULTRY DISEASES.

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DISEASE is one of the handicaps to successful poultry keeping and should be guarded against at all times. Unless kept in a healthy condition, chicks will not grow properly, and mature fowls will lose their vigor and vitality and become unproductive and unprofitable.

It is far better to prevent disease by proper care and attention than to attempt to cure a bird after it is sick. Therefore it is important to watch the flock closely at all times for any signs of disease, so in case an outbreak occurs it may be checked at once. Prevention is always better than cure, and all boys and girls who wish to succeed in poultry-club work should try to give their birds such good care and keep their houses so well cleaned and disinfected that both fowls and chicks will keep hardy and vigorous and allow no opportunity for sickness to creep in.

Some diseases may be treated successfully, while others of a more serious nature usually are fatal. However, if only one or two birds of a flock become sick it is usually advisable to kill them immediately (unless they are choice specimens) and burn or bury the carcasses. If the birds are kept and an attempt is made to doctor or cure them the disease may prove contagious and spread throughout the entire flock.

The more common poultry diseases and those which poultry-club members are likely to find most troublesome are gapes (in young chicks), roup, chicken pox, and scaly leg.

GAPES.

The disease known as gapes, which is quickly noticed because of the sneezing and gaping of the chick, affects only young chicks and young turkeys, and usually develops during the first few weeks of their lives.

It is caused by a little worm which attaches itself to the inside of the windpipe, where after a few days it will increase in numbers to such an extent as to obstruct or stop up the windpipe, making it difficult for the chick to breath, and unless the worms are removed at once it will soon strangle, choke, and die. The female worm produces large quantities of eggs while in the windpipe, and these are thrown out by the chick in sneezing, or are swallowed, pass through the intestines, and are scattered with the droppings. After a few days young worms hatch from these eggs and live in the earth for a long time. If picked up and swallowed by young chicks they quickly find their way to the windpipe, develop, and cause the disease to appear. This explains how infection is carried over from one year to another, and why ground used year after year becomes so infested or filled with these little worms that chicks can not be raised upon it.

Treatment.—Take a long hair from a horse's tail and twist the two ends together so as to form a loop. Hold the chick's head firmly with one hand, with the neck out straight, forcing the beak open with the fingers. When the glottis, which is the little opening at the root of the tongue, is open for breathing, insert the loop end of the hair, pressing it down the chick's windpipe about 1 inch. Give it two or three turns and then withdraw it. This will usually bring out several of the worms. Make sure that the hair is run down the windpipe and not down the chick's gullet. Each time the hair may be inserted a little deeper until it reaches nearly the full length of the neck, extreme care being taken not to choke or injure the chick. All worms taken out should be shaken off the hair and scalded or burned.

Prevention.—The best preventive for gapes is to keep the chicks on fresh, clean soil at all times. If they become affected with the disease, remove them at once to fresh ground where there is plenty of green grass. Ground occupied by chicks affected with gapes should be covered with a thick coating of lime and then spaded up thoroughly or plowed to destroy any worms that may possibly exist. Chicks should not be raised on the same ground again for at least two seasons.

ROUP.

Roup is a disease which affects the eyes, nose, and throat. The first signs are watery eyes, swollen eyelids, loss of appetite, and a thin, watery discharge from the nostrils; after a few days the discharge becomes thick and interferes with the bird's breathing. In severe cases the side of the bird's head is hot and badly swollen and the eyelids stuck together with a yellowish, cheesy substance.

Roup frequently develops from a hard cold, but more often is brought into the flock by other birds that have had the disease

or have been exposed to it. It is very contagious. The saliva or discharge from the mouth and nostrils carries the germs, and if the sick birds are allowed to remain or eat or drink with the others the disease will spread very quickly throughout the flock. Birds that are out of condition or lacking in vitality are usually the first ones to become affected and the last ones to recover, and sometimes carry and spread the disease for several months after they appear to be cured.

Treatment.—The sick birds should be removed at once from the flock and put into warm, dry quarters where there is plenty of fresh air but no drafts. Take some warm water, add a little salt (about one teaspoonful to a quart of water), and carefully wash the eyes and mouth, using a soft cloth or a piece of absorbent cotton. It is also well to rub or massage about the nostrils and under the eyes to loosen any of the watery discharge or secretion that may have ac-

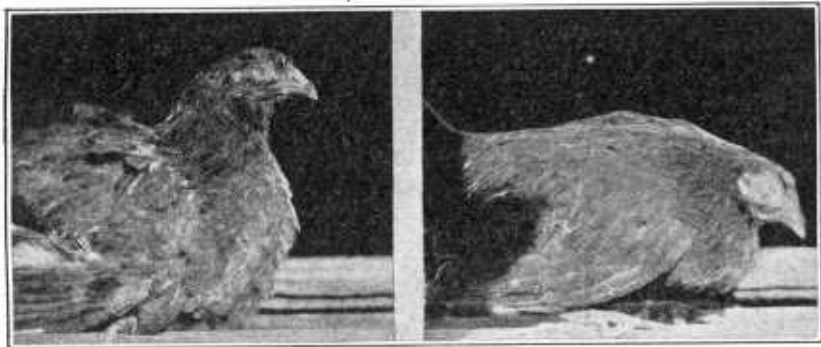


FIG. 1.—(Left) Hen showing first stages of roup. The eye is swollen and watery and the eyelids closed. (Right) Hen showing advanced stages of roup. Eyes and head swollen, eyelids closed, and the bird weak and droopy from loss of appetite.

cumulated there. After cleansing take two heaping teaspoonfuls (one-half ounce) of boric acid, or a small half-teaspoonful (1 dram) of permanganate of potash, which can be purchased at almost any drug store, dissolve in 1 pint of water, and wash the eyes and mouth thoroughly; or dip the bird's head into a bowl of the solution, repeating the treatment two or three times daily. A tablespoonful of peroxid of hydrogen mixed with 2 tablespoonfuls of water and injected into the bird's nostrils (see illustration on front cover) with a small oil can or medicine dropper is very beneficial. After the bird has been treated in this manner grease the head with camphorated oil or carbolated vaseline. It is also advisable to put a small quantity of permanganate of potash into the drinking water, as it helps to prevent the disease from spreading. In very severe cases it is best to kill the bird at once, as seldom, if ever, can it be fully and permanently cured.

Prevention.—Keep the house clean, well ventilated, and disinfected. Be sure that the birds are not exposed to drafts so as to catch cold. Fowls or chicks purchased from other breeders should be put into a separate house. If this is not possible, watch each specimen closely for two or three weeks for any sign of the disease, so that if it appears the bird may be removed before the others are affected.

CHICKEN POX.

Chicken pox (sometimes called sorehead) is another very contagious disease. It makes its appearance in the form of irregular whitish patches or festers which later develop into brown spots or crusts (resembling a scab of a sore) on the comb, wattles, eyelids, and around the beak and nostrils. In severe cases these patches or sores increase in numbers to such extent that the birds have difficulty in opening their eyes and beaks, and if neglected many will die.

Treatment.—Apply a liberal quantity of carbolated vaseline to all the affected parts. This treatment after a short time will cause the patches or crusts to soften and drop off, when the tissue or sore underneath should be painted with tincture of iodine or 5 per cent solution of carbolic acid. Five pounds of fine-powdered sulphur mixed with each 100 pounds of dry mash is also beneficial in effecting a cure. As soon as the disease makes its appearance spray the houses and coops thoroughly with some good disinfectant (preferably some wood preservative or coal-tar preparation), and scald the drinking fountains and feed dishes thoroughly with boiling water. Repeat every two or three days until after all the birds have fully recovered.

Prevention.—Keep all roosting quarters clean, dry, and well disinfected. During the summer, when the disease is most common, mix 3 pounds of powdered sulphur with each 100 pounds of dry mash, allowing the birds to eat all they want. Chicken pox usually attacks late-hatched chicks more often and more severely than early hatched ones, which makes it advisable to hatch as early in the season as possible.

SCALY LEG.

Scaly leg is easily recognized by the enlarged, roughened appearance of the feet and legs. It is caused by a little mite which burrows beneath the scales and causes the formation of a yellowish, powdery substance which keeps raising up the scales until they present an unsightly appearance. In severe cases, if the birds are not cared for, the joints of the toes become inflamed and make the birds lame and sometimes unable to walk. The disease is contagious, although it spreads rather slowly.

Treatment.—Wash the bird's legs well with soap and warm water and remove all loose scales. Rub well with a half-and-half mixture

of kerosene and linseed oil (melted lard or vaseline may be used in place of linseed oil), or fill a can with the mixture, and at night, after the birds have gone to roost, dip each bird's legs into it and allow them to soak for a minute; then return the bird to the roost. Repeat the treatment every three or four days until the scales are removed. Oil of earaway used in the same manner is also very effective.

Prevention.—Spray the roosts, dropping boards, and all near-by cracks and crevices thoroughly and often so as to keep them free from mites. Examine the bird's shanks occasionally, and if any signs of scaly leg appear rub them well with oil, as directed above, to prevent the disease from developing.

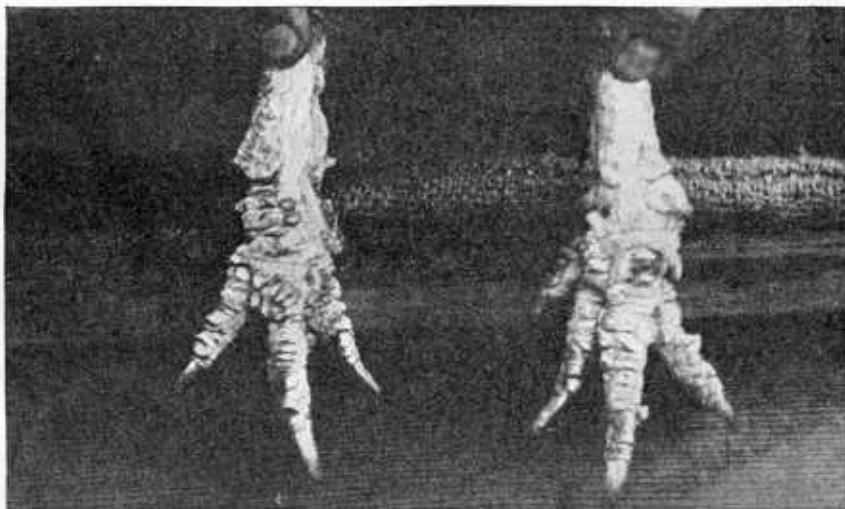


FIG. 2.—Legs of hen badly affected with scaly leg. Note the rough, loose appearance of the scales caused by the mites burrowing underneath.

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE.

Remember that it is much easier to keep birds healthy and well than to cure them after they are sick. Club members are therefore urged to guard against disease by giving their fowls and chicks proper care at all times. Keep in mind the following: Lice, mites, filth, poor feed, dirty water, damp houses, drafts, and lack of care and attention breed disease. Sunlight, fresh air, clean houses and runs, good feed, fresh water, and good care and attention mean health, vigor, and profits.

For information regarding other poultry diseases write to United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletin 957, "Poultry Diseases," or ask your poultry-club leader to obtain a copy for you.

FARMERS' BULLETINS SPECIALLY USEFUL FOR MEMBERS OF BOYS' AND GIRLS' POULTRY CLUBS.

- 1105. Care of Mature Fowls.
- 1106. Incubation of Hens' Eggs.
- 1107. Brood Coops and Appliances.
- 1108. Care of Baby Chicks.
- 1109. Preserving Eggs.
- 1110. Lice, Mites, and Cleanliness.
- 1111. Management of Growing Chicks.
- 1112. Culling for Eggs and Market.
- 1113. Poultry Houses.
- 1115. Selection and Preparation of Fowls for Exhibition.
- 1116. The Selection and Care of Poultry Breeding Stock.

OTHER FARMERS' BULLETINS ON POULTRY RAISING.

- 287. Poultry Management.
- 528. Hints to Poultry Raisers.
- 574. Poultry House Construction.
- 585. Natural and Artificial Incubation of Hens' Eggs.
- 624. Natural and Artificial Brooding of Chickens.
- 656. The Community Egg Circle.
- 682. A Simple Trap Nest for Poultry.
- 684. Squab Raising.
- 697. Duck Raising.
- 767. Goose Raising.
- 791. Turkey Raising.
- 801. Mites and Lice on Poultry.
- 806. Standard Varieties of Chickens: I. The American Class.
- 830. Shipping Eggs by Parcel Post.
- 849. Capons and Caponizing.
- 858. The Guinea Fowl.
- 889. Back-Yard Poultry Keeping.
- 898. Standard Varieties of Chickens: II. The Mediterranean and Continental Classes.
- 957. Important Poultry Diseases.
- 1040. Illustrated Poultry Primer.
- 1052. Standard Varieties of Chickens: III. The Asiatic, English, and French Classes.
- 1067. Feeding Hens for Egg Production.

Bureau of Chemistry Circular 61, revised, How to Kill and Bleed Market Poultry.

For copies of these bulletins or further information on poultry raising, write to your poultry-club leader, or to the Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.